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### **Calving Season Advantages**

I was able to hear from Cattle Fax Analyst Tanner Aherin this week. Cattle Fax keeps a keen eye on the markets, they analyzed trends for 2019. This organization has been around for 50 years. The topic was length of calving season. Most of the producers in the high return column have calving seasons of 45 days. That's the high 20%, the rest of them have calving seasons up to 60 days.

The reasons cited for a condensed calving season are a more uniform calf crop. Of course, it gives your cows a longer time frame to recover from calving, lactation and breed back again. The main reason that can hit you right in the wallet, is heavier weaning weights. For instance, if your weaning weight is 555 pounds, if you have a 45-day calving season, you could expect the weaning weight of calves born 46 to 60 days later to weigh 547 pounds, from 61 to 90 days the weaning weight would be 537 pounds, and 90 plus days at 517 pounds. If you do the math, assuming \$1.75 a pound, you would see an advantage of \$14 a head, \$31.50, and \$66.50 for the different calving season length.

The second topic was how many 550 pound calves will it take to pay for a bred cow, running age? Traditionally it's been about one and a half calves, but the last 4-5 years the ratio is more like 1.65 and a few years back it went to 1.75. Right now, with moderate drought bred cows are pretty affordable. Whether you are expanding or just buying some replacements, pick a price for 550 pound calves and use the 1.65 ratio and expect that for bred cows. Cattle Fax staff are optimistic about calf prices in 2021. I hope they are right!

Their research on what vaccination does for your herd was also interesting. Sixty-five percent of all producers vaccinate calves at spring turnout. Then prior to weaning their calves, 50% of producers do this. Twenty-five percent vaccinate again at weaning or after weaning. There is a small fraction of producers less than 5% don't vaccinate at all. Besides it being the right thing to do, there is a financial reward for vaccinating weaned calves. Cattle Fax estimates if you vaccinate your calves more than one time you can get a gain of \$85 a calf (partially due to the vaccination program, genetics, management and your reputation).

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### ***To Till or Not To Till...***

A recent social media post jokingly pointed out the degree to which ‘recreational’ tillage occurs. Essentially, it was saying the quicker we finish harvest, the more tillage we’ll see, simply because we have time. So while there is truth to *some* tillage being recreational, there are times when it might be necessary.

One instance where tillage may become a necessity is for compaction issues. If you think that’s the case on your farm, now is a good time to do some monitoring. Start by digging down – to 18 inches if possible - and look for dense layers that can restrict roots. If roots have been able to penetrate the platy soil layer, it probably isn’t root-limiting. If you note horizontal roots or roots that are stubby and gnarled, lacking root hairs, tillage might be a consideration.

If you do decide to deep till there is only need to till about an inch below the dense zone. Doubling tillage depth quadruples the power requirement, so going too deep is a waste of time and energy. Deeper tillage may also destroy soil structure.

Bottom line: there’s only a benefit to deep tillage when compaction is root limiting. Tillage does temporarily loosen soils, but they tend to re-compact and become denser with time because soil structure is broken in to smaller pieces. That means deep tillage effects will only last for a short period unless traffic patterns are controlled, or tillage system is changed. Effects may be negative if soils are too wet and soil smearing instead of soil fracture is the result.

For additional information on determining if deep tillage is needed – or when it’s being effective, check out this KSU Agronomy eUpdate article, available upon request or online at: [https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr\\_social/eu\\_article.throck?article\\_id=1184](https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/eu_article.throck?article_id=1184). NOTE: there may be other options to combat compaction as well. That’s another article for another day...

### ***Natural Needle Drop***

If you haven’t noticed the yellowing needles yet, take a second look. Natural fall needle drop on pines, arborvitae, and spruce has actually been in full swing for over a month now.

Every year, the natural phenomenon that is natural needle drop occurs on these evergreen species. In the process, older needles - generally those two to four years old - on the *interior* of the tree turn yellow, then brown, eventually dropping off. It might look rough, but the tree is not harmed. It is generally worse in stress years.

If *exterior* needles or tips are affected, something else may be at work. Fall needle drop occurs on needles closest to the trunk and isn’t typically associated with spotting or banding. Other diseases can affect evergreens and may require treatment. Fall needle drop does not.

Not sure what your tree might be exhibiting? Contact a District Office or e-mail me. We can discuss what you are seeing to determine if it’s of concern or not.

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## **Stereotypes of Older Adults often Lead to Negative Impacts**

Quite often in life, without knowing or realizing it, many of us show our own bias, perhaps toward people, situations, or even political contests.

Erin Yelland says those are implicit biases. “An implicit bias is an attitude or a stereotype that affects our understanding, actions, and decisions,” said Yelland, an adult development and aging specialist with K-State Research and Extension.

“These ideas that we have from the moment we are born really do affect so much of what we do – our understanding, how we perceive the world, and the actions and decisions that we make. They are unconscious, and we do not realize that they are happening.”

In her professional life, Yelland is especially keen to implicit bias toward older adults, known as ageism. Recently, she and colleagues from North Dakota State University and South Dakota State University talked with extension agents in their states about the impacts of ageism – and what can be done about it.

“Ageism refers to assumptions made about people based on how old they are,” said Jane Strommen, gerontology state specialist with North Dakota State extension. “Ageism has been shown to have significant negative impacts on older adults in a variety of areas.”

Leacey Brown, a gerontology field specialist with South Dakota State extension, said research indicates that 1 in 7 dollars spent on the most costly medical conditions in the United States can be attributed to negative effects of ageism. That amounts to approximately \$33 billion in health or related costs to older Americans.

Yelland said our society and the media often portray older adults in ways that foster implicit bias.

“One thing that is interesting to consider, though, is that your implicit biases don’t always align with your actions, and it’s important for each of us – if we have an implicit bias that we are not comfortable with – to take steps that helps our outward actions align with our personal beliefs,” she said.

In other words, she notes, implicit biases can be ‘un-learned.’ “How to ‘de-bias’ is an ongoing field of study. We are constantly learning more about how we can de-bias ourselves when those implicit biases are so strongly embedded in our brains and lives.”

Yelland’s ideas to help overcome implicit biases include: See people as individuals. Blind yourself from the individual. For example, if reviewing job resumes, take a person’s name off so you are not tempted to judge the individual based on gender, race, background, or other areas.

Work toward changing your responses, and reflect. Be mindful of your outward responses to others. Once you have an interaction with that person, step back and reflect.

“As a professional working with an older audience, one of the things we see is infantilization of older adults, which means we treat older adults like children,” Yelland said. “We use words like ‘honey’ or ‘sweetie,’ or we say that an older couple is ‘super cute,’ which are things we say about our children.

“These are things that we want to be mindful of and make sure we are treating older adults as adults themselves.”

Take a walk in someone else’s shoes. Think about what it would be like to be an older adult who is stereotyped. How would that make you feel, and what can you do to make sure you are limiting that in our own behaviors and actions.

Purposefully increase your exposure to individuals or groups of people who you have an implicit bias toward. Get into the ‘uncomfortable’ zone with groups of people in settings where you can have conversations and interact.